

THE WHITE HOUSE

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November 5, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT'S FILE

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon  
Prime Minister Indira Gandhi  
Mr. Parmeshwar Narain Haksar  
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

TIME & PLACE: 11:20 a.m., November 5, 1971,  
in the Oval Office

President Nixon opened the meeting by discussing the purpose and objectives of his trip to Peking. The President emphasized that he had long sought to terminate the period of non-communication between the United States and the 750 million people in the People's Republic of China. He explained that his approach was pragmatic and that communication could only serve to improve the overall environment in Asia and to ease tensions by alleviating the frustrations generated by isolation. However, he did not foresee fundamental changes in the differences which now divided the peoples of entirely different systems. On the other hand, the very act of discussing differences could not but contribute to the easing of tensions. It was obvious that extremists on both sides would attempt to complicate, if not prevent, the opening of channels between the United States and mainland China. Nonetheless, it was the President's responsibility to attempt to improve communications despite the difficulties.

The Prime Minister expressed support for the President's decision to visit Peking and noted that opposition within her own country frequently worked to prevent initiatives dictated in the overall interest of peace. Had she reacted incorrectly, it would have tended to unite the opposition. She had managed to keep the opposition divided and therefore less effective.

The Prime Minister then asked about the situation in Southeast Asia. President Nixon replied by explaining that the negotiating track was still open and remained the preferred course for the United States. On the

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other hand, with each passing day the chances of a negotiated solution appeared less possible. If the other side maintained a position of intransigence, then the United States Government would have no other choice but to proceed with other actions. This would involve whatever steps were necessary to obtain the release of U.S. prisoners. The President emphasized that Hanoi should understand by now that the United States was prepared to withdraw totally from Vietnam but not at the price of overthrowing Thieu. If Hanoi remained dedicated to the proposition that the United States must withdraw totally and at the same time remove Thieu, then the alternative left to the United States was clear. He noted that if Hanoi were supported by only one of the larger powers then the problem would be greatly reduced. However, with both Peking and Moscow competing with each other in Hanoi the situation was more complex.

Mr. Haksar then asked the President about U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China. The President reiterated that no one should expect the immediate normalization of relations with Mainland China but merely the initiation of a process. The trip to Moscow, on the other hand, was being undertaken on the basis of solid achievements in a number of areas. The Berlin Agreement was a significant breakthrough which made the Moscow Summit a logical step in a deliberate and careful U.S.-Soviet dialogue. In the case of our relations with Moscow which involved the full range of European problems the stakes were much higher. The situation in Asia today represented a lesser order of criticality. Furthermore, U.S. and Soviet interests were more complex. The Soviets were interested in trade, as was the United States. The Soviets needed U.S. technology since their economy was somewhat flat. If the right conditions developed, there might be some value in exploring the ramifications of a European Security Conference. Before doing so, however, the U.S. expected agreement on the Berlin settlement by the two Germanys. Then, the United States would be willing to consider the agenda for such a conference. This was separate and distinct from the mutual balance of forces question. The President commented that with respect to both of these issues there was probably little chance for substantial movement before the Moscow summit.

Prime Minister Gandhi then asked the President to discuss the Middle East. The President stated that the United States wished to be as helpful as possible in maintaining the ceasefire and preventing the resumption of hostilities. At the same time, there had been little or no progress. The

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Soviet Union for their part could assist by urging the Egyptians toward restraint. The level of Soviet arms shipments constituted an essential ingredient. It could hardly be in the Soviets' interests if fighting were to be resumed. Nevertheless, the situation might be approaching a critical point once again.

The President then summarized the world scene in hopeful terms. He noted that while there were many volatile danger spots, the overall outlook has been greatly improved through the opening of a dialogue with Peking and an improvement of relationships with the Soviet Union. In such an environment and with restraint and wisdom, the world could be viewed with a greater measure of hope.

Prime Minister Gandhi expressed her appreciation for the reception she and her party had received in the United States and indicated her great admiration for the accomplishments achieved under President Nixon's leadership. The Prime Minister indicated a willingness to provide Indian good offices in solving future problems and to undertake whatever courses of action would be most helpful in stabilizing the world situation.

President Nixon expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister for her generous words and concluded the meeting by commenting that his principal focus of interest continued to be world affairs. He attempted to view the world from historical perspective rather than in tactical terms. One should look at things in terms of decades rather than years. Only in such a context could the issue of world peace receive the kind of enlightened consideration that it must have.

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